

EFFECTIVE WHITE TEACHERS OF BLACK CHILDREN TEACHING WITHIN A COMMUNITY

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This article is a report of a qualitative case study of the beliefs and practices of three White public primary school teachers. The teachers were nominated as effective by key members of the Black community in which they teach. The purpose of the study was to understand effective teaching of Black children by White teachers in light of community preferences. Findings suggest a complex and interwoven relationship between the participant teachers' beliefs and practices that fostered their Black students' learning in ways significantly compatible with the beliefs and practices of effective Black teachers described in the literature. Three subthemes from a total of 25 are highlighted by way of example. They focus, respectively, on discipline, view of teaching self, and literacy education. A fourth subtheme, racial consciousness, is also explored. Findings related to this subtheme differed in part from the discussion of effective Black teachers in the literature.

Keywords: *White teachers; Black students; teacher education; community norms; critically responsive teaching; cultural synchronization*

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Current trends in public school enrollment and teacher characteristics (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2001) indicate the overwhelming probability that Black children will experience mostly White teachers in their education. At the same time, however, a review of the literature (Cooper, 2001) suggests that relatively little is known about effective White public school teachers of Black children. A notable exception are the three White teachers described in Ladson-Billings's (1994a) study of successful teachers of African American children. There is, however, a substantive and growing body of literature on effective Black teachers of Black children, which could be relied on to support White teachers in their efforts to teach across racial lines. Nonetheless, this research remains largely unaccounted for in the general literature on effective praxis.

Numerous researchers, including Delpit (1995), Foster (1994), Irvine (1990), and Lipman (1998), have warned about the dangers of defining good teaching without accounting for the emic perspective (Siddle Walker, 1996), that is, who or what is valued by the community the teachers are intended to serve. This article reports on a qualitative case study of the beliefs and practices of three White teachers of mostly Black children in a public primary-grade school, nominated as effective by their Black principal and Black assistant principal. Nominations were based on the administrators' knowledge of the teachers' effectiveness in helping Black children achieve success in school, including learning to read, and standardized test scores. Nominations were also influenced by informal conversation with parents and the fact that the teachers were popular choices with parents for classroom placement. The purpose of the study

was to provide a “holistic and meaningful” (Yin, 1994, p. 3) description of what good teaching of Black children by White teachers looks like to a particular Black community by accepting its choices of effective teachers. Findings were compared to the literature on effective teachers of Black children for generalizability. Ladson-Billings’s (1994a) call for culturally relevant teaching and Irvine’s (1990) theory of culturally synchronistic teaching of Black children guided the research.

The study was organized around two essential questions. First, what are the beliefs and practices of three White public school teachers of Black children, who were identified as effective teachers by key Black educators of a historically Black school district? Second, how do their beliefs and practices compare and contrast to the effective teachers of Black children described in the literature? An overarching finding was the interweaving of beliefs and practices at both the operational and conceptual level across the five major themes. By way of example, three specific subthemes are explored that demonstrate (a) the wide-ranging complexity of the teachers’ intertwining beliefs and practices and (b) the generalizability of the findings to the literature on effective teachers of Black children. The subthemes center on reading and writing practices, discipline, and a view of teaching self as a second mother. To clarify, “second mother” refers to those beliefs and practices usually identified with habits of mothering, such as an overt concern for physical safety or bathroom needs. It does not imply the absence of a mother at home. A fourth subtheme of the findings that is also explored is racial consciousness. This only partially generalized to the literature.

The study focused on classroom life because, although researchers have long acknowledged the implications of school context on teaching (Anyon, 1997; Lipman, 1998), teacher-student interactions and the learning environment are two factors that individual teachers can reasonably control. The study also focused when possible on teaching during the Language Arts period. This was to help delimit the study and,

if possible, to look more closely at what the community values in this “gatekeeping” content area. Data unrelated to Language Arts were included if exemplary of subthemes. Data were derived from interviews with the teachers and classroom observations. Implications for preservice and inservice teacher education students are discussed.

SIGNIFICANCE AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Recent census figures indicate that children of color are the fastest growing segment of the population, currently representing 40% of all school-age children (Anyon, 1997). Of these, 17.2% of students enrolled in the public schools are Black (NCES, 2001). The significance of this study for teacher education lies in the fact that Black teachers represent only 7.3% of public school teachers, whereas more than 90% are White (NCES, 2001). The overwhelming potential for Black children to be taught by White teachers has exceptional significance for Black children for whom, traditionally, Black teachers have figured extensively in their development both in and out of the classroom, often serving as “other mothers” (Foster, 1997, p. 31), role models, community leaders, and activists (Brooks, 1987; Irvine, 1990; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994a; Lipman, 1998). The significance of the study is further boosted by the phenomenon that school reform, which directly or indirectly targets teachers’ race or cultural norms as a factor in children’s academic success or failure, is often emotionally charged and easily misunderstood (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Lipman, 1998). This impedes effective teacher education and successful teaching across racial lines.

This study was not based on the assumption that effective teachers of any color can change entrenched bureaucracies, social inequities, or economic travails (Anyon, 1997; Sleeter, 1993). The assumption was made, however, that (a) individual teachers can be vital forces in schools and individual classrooms, and (b) an understanding of what a community values in its teachers is essential to effective teaching.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Guiding Propositions

Ladson-Billings's (1994a) call for culturally relevant teaching and Irvine's (1990) theory of cultural synchronization provide an overarching framework for interpreting the literature on effective teachers of Black children and a starting point for examining the data. Both rely on acceptance of the emic perspective (Siddle Walker, 1996) in determining what makes a good teacher.

In brief, culturally relevant teaching of Black children results in the cultivation of "relevant Black personalities" (Ladson-Billings, 1994a, p. 17) through certain "principles at work" (Ladson-Billings, 1994a, p. 128) in the classroom. The principles at work in culturally relevant teaching reflect the following:

- personal attributes that include high self-esteem, expectations, a high regard for others;
- resistance to the status quo for African American students;
- identification with and commitment to the African American community;
- view of students as extended family members;
- pedagogical practices that assume a teacher's knowledge of her or his subject matter, a respect for children's prior knowledge, and an ability to link schooling with life's greater issues;
- high expectations of children's abilities to learn content and beyond;
- stress on mastery of literacy and math; and
- judicious use of authority in the classroom.

Cultural synchronization, according to Irvine (1990), refers to the correlation between two people in terms of the "unstated rules and subtleties" of their common or unique cultures (p. xix). Culturally synchronistic teaching of Black children is "rooted in the concepts of Afrocentricity and the cultural distinctiveness of Afro-American life" (p. 23). Cultural synchronization with Black children in schools is also dualistic in nature. Though, as noted, it accounts for and respects what the Black community generates in style, language, behavior, and tradition, it also insists that Black children perform well by standard educational measures.

Teacher expectations are seen as "powerful contributors" (p. 61) in this. The confluence of all conditions for cultural synchronization in any given institution is rare. Individual teachers, though, may be expected to embody what the setting as a whole cannot.

Two specific bodies of literature provided the theoretical framework for the study. The first was largely concerned with Black teachers and the education of Black students. This literature was not confined to that written by Black teachers or scholars, though their work represents the bulk of the contribution, and included Anderson (1988), Banks (1988), Delpit (1994, 1995), Foster (1997), Gay (2000), Irvine (1990), Ladson-Billings (1994a, 1994b), and Siddle Walker (1996), among others. The second body of literature comprised selected literature by non-Black (White or other) scholars and teachers on teaching Black children. This category included the work of Anyon (1997); Au and Kawakami (1994); Fine, Weis, Powell, and Mun Wong (1997); Rist (1970); and Sleeter (1993). This category also included work by what I termed "independent" White teachers, who wrote on their school experiences with Black children to some public acclaim. This included work by Ayers (1993, 1995), Hoffman (1996), Kohl (1967/1988), Kohl and Kozol (1998), Kozol (1967), Meier (1995), and Paley (1979, 1995, 1997). Finally, research on Catholic school teachers, whose ranks, too, are largely White, also contributed to the review (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993).

The literature on Black teachers teaching Black children revealed considerable overlap in practice and ideology that was significantly compatible with Ladson-Billings's (1994a) principles of culturally relevant teaching and Irvine's (1990) theory of cultural synchronization described above. Common threads that ran throughout the research on Black, White, and Catholic school teachers were the teachers' unwavering refusal to accept Black children's scholastic underachievement, their commitment to equal educational opportunity, and their deep respect for Black parents and the Black community.

It is important to point out that the reviewed literature reflected both traditional studies and nontraditional studies. Traditional studies, qualitative and quantitative, were distinguished by their use and interpretation of prior research, their identifiable research questions, and their explicit methodologies. Examples represented a range of approaches and included Bryk et al. (1993), Foster (1993, 1994), Ladson-Billings (1994a), Irvine (1990), Lipman (1998), McIntyre (1997), and Siddle Walker (1996). Nontraditional studies were represented by the presence of "critical personal narrative and autoethnography" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999) as exemplified by Delpit (1995), Irvine and Foster (1995), Kohl (1967/1988), Kohl and Kozol (1998), Kozol (1967), and Paley (1979, 1995, 1997). Relevant to this type of research is Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1993, 1999) description of "conceptual research" or the "teacher essay" commonly associated with the "teacher research" movement. The decision to include this nontraditional research was based, first, on its perceived influence on both the academy's or public's view of the problem. Delpit's first-person narratives on culture and literacy, for example, first published in the *Harvard Educational Review* (1988), have been widely influential and remain the most requested reprint articles of the journal. Kohl's *36 Children*, the author's passionate account of his first year of teaching in a Harlem sixth grade, has been credited with starting the urban school reform movement. Second, other nontraditional research was found to complement more traditional research studies. For instance, Irvine and Foster's (1995) edited collection of Black scholars' reflections on their Catholic school experiences gave personal testimony to many aspects of Bryk et al.'s qualitative and quantitative study on Catholic schools and Youniss and Convey's (2000) edited collection on the Catholic school tradition. By contrast, research on the education of Black students that did not focus on effective pedagogy and practice was not included. One example was Fordham's (1993) exploration of the consequences of poor quality education in *Blacked Out: Dilemmas of Race, Identity, and Success at Capital High*.

METHOD

Participants and Method of Selection

The three teachers who participated in the study were chosen through a variation on Foster's (1993) "community nomination" method. Foster, and later Ladson-Billings (1994a), relied on nominations from known or connected members of select Black communities to identify successful teachers of African American children. As a White researcher, however, I acknowledged my outsider status by "yield(ing) my authority" to the largest possible Black community I could engage (Sartwell, 1998). I sought, first, a school district and municipality with a long history of Black leadership with which I had no prior relationship. Attempting to make participation at the building level as authentic as possible, I next sought institutional acceptance, by proposing the study to the superintendent of schools, a Black male, and then to the assistant superintendent, also a Black male. I was referred by the latter to the head of the Language Arts division, a White woman with 30 years in the district. She directed me to key informants at the building level, a Black female principal and Black female assistant principal. These informants nominated five White teachers as effective with Black children. They based their nominations on the children's academic achievements, including learning to read and standardized test scores. They also took into account informal conversations with parents as well as requests for classroom placement. Following a presentation on the proposed study to all five nominees, I asked for volunteers. Three of the five teachers agreed to participate. The first was Mrs. Josephine Parker (names of all places and persons are pseudonyms), a first-grade White teacher with 9 years' experience. She had never taught outside of the district. The second was Mrs. Christine Woods, a second-grade teacher in the gifted program, who had 29 years' experience, all of which were also in the district. By district mandate, these teachers implemented the Open Court reading program. Open Court is best

known, and often criticized in progressive reading circles, for its systematic, explicit instruction in reading subskills. Proponents claim that more recent iterations place an additional emphasis on children's literature and comprehension skills. The third participant was Mrs. Karen Nelson, a reading specialist with 30 years' experience, who had 21 years in the district. She ran a Reading Recovery classroom, a remedial program based on the work of Clay (1989), which emphasizes fluency and attention to meaning.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in the Easton school district, 20 miles east of a major north-eastern metropolis. Easton has had a majority Black population for more than 30 years. Approximately 83% of the children at the Lexington Avenue primary school where the data were collected are entitled to free or reduced lunch under the Title I program. Data collection took place between January 1999 and June 1999 over the course of 20 weeks in the classrooms of the three White teachers. I interviewed each teacher the week before I began classroom visitations, halfway through the visitation period, and after classroom observations were over. I also conducted a group member check of the data with the teachers and then with the administrators before the final draft was completed. Allowing for school holidays and illness, I observed in each teacher's room once a week for 10 weeks. I usually visited the two classroom teachers in the morning during the Language Arts period for an average of an hour and a half. Some visits were shorter or longer depending on the vagaries of school life such as fire drills, talks with the school counselors, library time, and so on. I visited the reading specialist while she conducted Reading Recovery sessions. As agreed, my status during each classroom visit was that of observer only. All three teachers and I usually chatted informally for a few minutes at the end of each visit. A tape recorder was used during each classroom visit and all interviews. Field notes were taken during each visit, which were later written up

TABLE 1 Operational Beliefs and Practices

Curriculum: Teachers stress mastery of
Assigned texts
Reading and writing curriculum, focus on subskills
Standard English as necessary for academic and social success
Teaching style: Teachers utilize structure and routine
Authoritative discipline
Clear instructions and feedback
Verbal guideposts
Organized environment
Individualized instruction
Alternative methods
Animated behavior
Monitoring of children's physical responses
Academic mediation
Intense focus on instruction

TABLE 2 Conceptual Beliefs and Practices

Teaching style: Teachers focus on
Fairness
Children's future
Professional dress
Teacher characteristics: Teachers possess
High expectations of self and Black children's abilities
A well-developed work ethic
An ability to reflect on performance
A view of self as teaching mother
Personal norms: Teachers possess
Respect for and commitment to Black community
Empathy for Black children
A willingness to learn from the Black community
A racial consciousness

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/1992) in the form of expanded notes following the visit.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data followed the basic recommendations set out by Bogdan and Biklen (1982/1992) and Miles and Huberman (1994), including sample coding, a start list of codes, recoding, pattern analysis, and creation of themes.

Final data analysis revealed the 2 major categories, operational beliefs and practices and conceptual beliefs and practices, 4 major themes, and 25 subthemes. Each major theme is briefly defined below and all subthemes are listed (see also Tables 1 and 2) to give a broader context for the subthemes related to discipline,

literacy, and mothering, which are discussed in full. As noted earlier, findings also included comparison with the existing literature on effective teachers of Black children. Significant similarities and dissimilarities are discussed.

Validity and Reliability

Internal validity, which asks if the findings match the reality, was achieved through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, and tapes), use of guiding theoretical propositions, peer review of coding procedures and findings, and member checks. Also, because one limitation in a study on teachers is the possibility that what the teachers said and did contradicted what the children actually experienced, additional data were collected on the children's responses as a final check on the validity of the findings. Following Yin's (1994) discussion of external validity, the generalizability of the findings was considered in relation to the existing theory on effective teachers of Black children.

Another limitation of any small-scale case studies of teachers is the tendency to focus on their individual differences. Thus, every attempt was made to describe findings by way of thematic similarities that were common to all three teachers. A focus on the collective evidence also allows us to avoid speculation that any one teacher's success is the mere result of personality (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Finally, it also allows us to generalize to the literature (Yin, 1994) with greater confidence. The fact that commonalities in beliefs and practices were found among teachers representing three different concentrations, that is, first-grade regular education, second-grade gifted education, and remedial reading, furthered the generalizability of the findings.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity was defined as that which could be given to the school by way of thanks for the opportunity to conduct the study. Teacher and

parent in-service on early literacy development was offered and received.

FINDINGS

Rokeach (1968) states that beliefs can be conscious or unconscious; can be found in what a person says or does; and are capable of being preceded by the phrase, "I believe that . . ." (p. 113). Implied in this definition and implicit to this study is the idea that beliefs are both cognitive and affective in nature. Practice, as related to Giroux and Simpson's (1989) view of pedagogy, refers to the way in which all areas of knowledge, social and cognitive, are transferred or disseminated.

Beyond the multifaceted characteristics of both beliefs and practices is the fact that, empirically speaking, they are often difficult to distinguish from each other. Attempts to do so sometimes isolate cause and effect, thereby distorting the data. It is not surprising, therefore, that initial efforts to organize the data under the two simple categories of beliefs and practices in the sample coding phase failed. Further data analysis suggested that a more fruitful path was to accept the interconnectedness of beliefs and practices but distinguish between those that were *manifest* in observable events, practice, or talk about practice and those that were discussed in the abstract or were *inferred* from practice. I regrouped the former as *operational beliefs and practices* and the latter as *conceptual beliefs and practices*. This resulted in a more holistic profile of the teachers. Mrs. Parker's stance toward reading instruction is a good example of this multitiered phenomenon. First, as derived from the interview data, her conceptual belief was that the ideal teacher is one who knows how to teach reading and writing well. Her conceptualized view of practice was that teaching reading and writing well should take whatever forms necessary to teach what the children needed to learn. From an operational point of view, Mrs. Parker believed that most of the children needed skill-based instruction to become good readers and writers. In actual practice, this was operationalized in the example of teaching

TABLE 3 Relationship Between Beliefs and Practices in Mrs. Parker's Reading Instruction

Operational practice—Instruction in rhyming words on word board is good skills-based practice
Operational belief—Most children need skill-based instruction to become good readers
Conceptual practice—Ideal teaching takes whatever form necessary
Conceptual belief—Ideal teachers know how to teach reading well

rhyming words through Word Board activities (see Table 3).

Operational Beliefs and Practices: Speech, Action, and Events Heard or Observed

This first category of findings comprised two major themes, curriculum and teaching style (see Table 1).

Curriculum. Curriculum was defined as the curricular objectives prescribed by the district. It was the most frequently occurring of the five dominant themes, if for no other reason than the sheer amount of time the teachers devoted to coverage of it. Curriculum data revealed three subthemes. They were (a) a preference for text-driven instruction; (b) mastery of reading and writing, with a focus on subskills; and (c) an insistence on standard English in writing and speaking.

Teaching style. Teaching style was defined as speech or actions, largely explicit, that were used to impart specific knowledge, values, and other information or that appeared to impact children's opportunities to learn. The fact that each teacher was an individual, and thus possessed her own unique teaching style, did not preclude commonalities in their delivery. This theme had the largest number of subthemes in the data. They were (a) a use of authoritative discipline style, (b) an emphasis on structure and routine, (c) a use of clear instructions and feedback around curriculum, (d) a use of verbal guideposts to help children anticipate what was

coming next in the day, (e) a maintenance of a neat and manageable environment, (f) a use of alternative teaching methods including public speaking, (g) a use of animated teaching style to engage students, (h) a monitoring of children's physical and verbal responses to instructions and events, (i) academic mediation as necessary, and (j) a focus on teaching over other nonacademic activities.

Conceptual Beliefs and Practices: Ideas Inferred From Practice and Interviews

The second category of findings, conceptual beliefs and practices, comprised three major themes: teaching style, personal norms, and teacher characteristics (see Table 2). Teaching style was the only theme common to both the operational and conceptual categories. Analysis suggested that the teachers' conceptual beliefs and practices provided the underlying rationale for their operational speech and actions.

Teaching style. Beliefs and practices related to teaching style that were not operationalized but could be inferred from explicit behavior were (a) focus on fairness and (b) orientation toward the children's futures. The teachers' conceptualization of teachers as professionals could also be inferred from (c) their professional dress.

Personal norms. Personal norms were defined as traits that guided the teachers' behavior above or beyond their teaching responsibilities. Unlike teacher characteristics, personal norms, although found in educational contexts, reflected a commitment to a system of values beyond education. It is assumed that all teachers bring personal norms to bear on their teaching. The subthemes, which exemplified these teachers' personal norms, revealed a particular focus on race. They were (a) respect for and commitment to the Black community, including an expressed desire to continue work in the community; (b) empathy for Black children; (c) a developing racial consciousness; and finally, (d) a willingness to learn from the Black community.

Teacher characteristics. Teacher characteristics were defined as personal attributes that influenced the quality of the teachers' work, including their ability to help the children achieve. The subthemes in this theme were (a) high expectations of self; (b) high expectations of children, including a commitment to helping the children develop critical thinking skills across the curriculum; (c) knowledge of subject matter; (d) a hard-working, reflective, positive sense of teaching self; and (e) a view of teaching self as a second mother.

Teachers in Action

Space restrictions prevent exploration of the findings from each subtheme. Given this, the findings for one subtheme from each major theme is examined. The specific subthemes were selected (a) to provide a balanced and descriptive portrait of the teachers in action and (b) to suggest the range and complexity of their beliefs and practices. The first is the teachers' insistence on mastery of reading and writing with a focus on subskills, a curriculum (operational) subtheme. The second is the teachers' authoritative discipline style, a subtheme of teaching style (operational). The teachers' view of themselves as a second mother is the third subtheme, under the major theme of teacher characteristics (conceptual). Finally, the subtheme of racial consciousness, from the major theme of personal norms (conceptual), is the fourth.

Mastery of reading and writing, with a focus on subskills. Like other school districts around the country, Easton has made the reading and writing curriculum the centerpiece of the primary school curriculum. All three teachers considered reading and writing, and to a somewhat lesser degree math, as foundational to the children's later academic success. The district required the classroom teachers to implement Open Court (SRA/McGraw-Hill, 2000), a well-known subskills-based, phonics-dependent reading program. The first- and second-grade teachers each spoke of the merits of the Open Court program. Mrs. Nelson, the Reading Recovery teacher, agreed with her colleagues on

this. Mrs. Parker acknowledged that her opinion was somewhat limited by the fact that she knew no other program as Open Court had been in the district since she started teaching. Each classroom teacher devoted approximately one and a half hours of daily instruction time or more to the reading portion of Open Court. The writing portion was treated as separate instruction time and did not occur every day.

Although the teachers appreciated the greater emphasis on children's literature in the most recent iteration of the Open Court program, they valued its on-going focus on skills. "I happen to like it," Mrs. Woods told me. "I think [combining it with] the spelling is very good. It has the phonetics, the spelling." Mrs. Parker admitted that she did not spend enough time on children's literature. She stressed the subskills portion of the program more, feeling this is what her children needed. Indeed, the routine I observed on all but two of my visits to her first grade began with drill at the blackboard around new words and vocabulary development; games at the word board that stressed prior information; instruction at the dry erase board on more sounds, blends, and other new concepts; and written assignments at the seats. Rhyming words; sounds of words; sounds of letters; writing of letters; writing of words; and other visual, audio, and print-related minilessons were repeated in some form every day. Mrs. Parker credited the Open Court trainer with helping her learn to teach the children to "feel" the sounds in their throats ("Aw. Aw. Aw."), copy her mouthing of words ("Look at me. Do this."), and focus on rhyming words.

In spite of Open Court's reputation for being a teacher-proof program (Moustafa & Lang, 2002), neither Mrs. Parker nor Mrs. Woods hesitated to describe ways in which they modified it or deviated from it as they saw necessary. I observed this in action several times. The first-grade curriculum, for example, requires that new words be introduced almost daily. These introduce new sound combinations. Believing that some of the children had not mastered the old sounds sufficiently, Mrs. Parker invented several games such as ABC Order (with boys against the girls) and a clapping game to count

syllables as daily supplements. I also observed her going beyond the Open Court emphasis on phonetic decoding to teach a wide range of reading strategies, such as checking for semantic, contextual, and pictorial clues.

Mrs. Nelson was recently trained in Reading Recovery, a strategy-based (vs. phonics) approach to teaching reading, far more in sync with a meaning-based approach (though it, too, relies on repetition, controlled vocabulary, and basal-type readers) than Open Court. Mrs. Nelson thought Reading Recovery had many advantages over the various remedial and phonics-based programs she had used for more than 25 years. Experience, however, had shown her that "there is no right way" to teach reading and writing. As much as she seemed to appreciate Reading Recovery's basic tenet of meaning over skills, for example, she believed children needed some direct instruction in skills to become fluent readers. When asked, she said their experience with Open Court in their regular classrooms complemented, not contradicted, their work with her in Reading Recovery. The two classroom teachers agreed with her and expressed their appreciation for the tenets of Reading Recovery in turn. Research on Reading Recovery and Open Court does not suggest this compatibility (Taylor, 1999).

Authoritative discipline style. All of the teachers could be said to employ overt classroom management techniques, which I described as an authoritative discipline style. It is to be distinguished from authoritarianism. Alfred North Whitehead (1929) wrote that authoritativeness should be an aim of education because of its emphasis on the use of *power for the student's good* and never as an end in itself or aggrandizement of the teacher's position. Most important, it is sanctioned by the target community. I interpreted the teachers' authoritative approach to classroom management and discipline as judicious and focused, employed to increase student achievement, self-efficacy, self-respect, and group membership for the sake of both individual and group development.

The teachers' use of an authoritative approach to discipline and classroom management was often accompanied by a firm, if not loud, and

what to some ears might sound like unfriendly tone of voice. During her introduction to an Open Court word study exercise, Mrs. Parker, for example, put an end to the children's interruptions with a silencing, "I'M talking. YOU'RE listening. Your turn comes at the end." At group time around vocabulary development, she caught Timothy's eye as he began to fool around with another child. Looking at him sternly, she admonished just as sternly, "Don't even think about it." She paused. "Don't even." When Jamar fussed and told Mrs. Nelson in Reading Recovery that he did not want to start with *Ben's Teddy Bear* that day, she responded "We'll START with *Ben's Teddy Bear*." He tried again, "Wait," he whined. "NO," she responded sharply. "I'm not waiting anymore. Open to page two." Jamar proceeded to read, but Mrs. Nelson was still not satisfied. "Don't make things up," she told him. "Don't put words in that aren't there. Read it one more time AND MAKE IT MATCH."

The teachers' insistence on compliance extended to all areas of classroom life. This was evident when Monica did an unacceptable job of cleaning her desk left sticky by a science lesson using glycerin. "Do I have to teach you how to wipe?" Mrs. Woods gibed, clearly annoyed. Monica answered quietly, "I know how to wipe already." Mrs. Woods continued in the same vein, "Okay. GOOD. Then DO it already." The teachers did not seem to hesitate to exercise their authority beyond their own class members or classroom walls. Other teachers' students in the cafeteria were told not to be so loud. A child was rebuked for bothering another one online. When two boys ran past her open classroom door one day, Mrs. Parker quickly excused herself to the class and walked rapidly into the hallway. "Gentlemen," she called firmly. "GET over here." As the boys walked toward her, she admonished them to slow down. As they started to their classroom again, she called after them, "And tell Mrs. Hunt I told you so."

The teachers were unapologetic about their in-charge attitude. I asked Mrs. Woods if a parent had ever chosen not to have a child placed with her again in the years when she looped with the first graders to second grade.

One. Because she felt—there was a discipline problem with the child, and, she didn't want me to be so strict. I'm kind of strict with them; and, you know, I'm sorry, I'm not going to let a child take over my class—unless I want them to.

She laughed heartily.

There was no apparent evidence that the children were upset or hurt by the teachers' use of an authoritative discipline style. Even Monica, the little girl who had been told to clean her desk better, got on with the task and was soon engaged in lively conversation with the child sitting next to her. In all instances, the teachers, too, almost immediately returned to a friendlier tone of voice and demeanor and the ongoing business of the classroom. Nor did the teachers seem to indulge their authority. Mrs. Woods, for example, seemed to know what would embarrass a child, including when to admonish in front of the group and when not to do so. One day, for instance, Serena had disobeyed her direct instructions to sit still and stop talking several times. Mrs. Woods was obviously frustrated. She went to the doorway and called for Serena to come out into the hall. Their conversation was not audible to the group. When Serena returned, she was quiet and stayed in her seat.

View of self as second mother. One of the largest subthemes of the teachers' conceptual beliefs and practices involved how the teachers saw themselves as second mothers to the children. The teachers' views of themselves as second mothers did not appear to be a by-product of age or experience, though they were all mothers. Rather, their views seemed grounded in their experience of caring for and worrying about the emotional health and welfare of the children, and the children responding positively. Mrs. Parker was most direct about her role as second mother and took pleasure in knowing the children accepted her as such. "That's the ultimate," she told me. "I talk to them as if they were my own children," she went on. "I tell them from Day One, I'm almost going to be like a second mom to you." She thought this helped the children learn to cooperate with her and trust her.

They fall in love with their teacher. The whole bit. . . . They call me Mommy a lot. . . . I don't allow it,

but they know then that they can feel as comfortable with me as they do with their own mother.

Mrs. Woods thought her maternal ways were the reason why a former student requested that her own child be placed in Mrs. Woods's class. It was also the reason, Mrs. Nelson explained, why Jamar visited her every morning, months after he had been terminated from Reading Recovery. "I think he missed the attention," she said, smiling. "One-on-one is very nice. You develop a relationship with a child when you work with him one-on-one."

At its most basic level, the teachers' mothering was manifested in their worry over the children's physical health and comfort. Mrs. Woods complained that people who are not teachers do not realize how much of the teaching day is spent worrying about whether a child has eaten or needs to see a doctor. One day she reached for a child's story to read, then paused and looked suddenly concerned. Reaching for a notepad, she told the child, "I'm sending you to the nurse. I want her to check your eyes." The teachers also monitored the children's fatigue level. "Are you getting tired?" Mrs. Nelson asked Jamar. "Oh, Jesse, I think you're still sick," she sympathized when Jesse appeared listless. Food played a minor, but persistent, role in the classrooms, not as a reward for good behavior as is commonly found in elementary classrooms, but more as a gesture of caretaking. Mrs. Nelson sent Jamar and Jesse away with cookies or pretzels every time, as long as they said the requisite thank you. Mrs. Parker kept sweets for occasional prizes. Mrs. Woods saved pizza for the child who missed the party and told Jermaine she would keep the special treat for him until the next day. The restroom and getting a drink were also factors during most visits that seemed to receive greater emphasis than usual. Only once did I observe a child's need to use the restroom denied, but this seemed to reflect Mrs. Woods's belief that the child was trying to get off task. Whole class opportunities to use the restroom were assured daily, and each teacher had her own supply of soap and paper towels with which the children washed up when they returned. (Apparently, the bathrooms could not be counted on to have either.) The children

seemed well versed in the necessity of hand washing, and those who tried to skip this step were told on by the others and then chastised by the teachers. One small focus of Mrs. Woods's mothering in the classroom was untied shoes. In a tone of mock complaint, she said, "I keep telling them, 'I'm not your mother. I don't want to tie your shoes.'" Then she shrugged her shoulders and added, "But, yet I still go and do it. So they don't trip. So they don't hurt themselves."

Threats, real or imagined, to the children's physical safety were taken seriously by the teachers. In the context of telling a story about her new book from the library, Serena revealed that she had ridden her bike there alone. Mrs. Woods interrupted the story and her expression grew sober. "Okay, but don't ride alone. Make sure someone is with you." Mrs. Parker came back with the class from a fire drill so flustered about one child's dawdling that she took 20 minutes to paint a graphic picture of how to save yourself in a burning building. I asked Mrs. Nelson why she picked up the children from their classroom for their Reading Recovery lesson. At first she said there was no real reason, that you got to know a child better while walking with him. Then she added that, besides, she did worry a little about children that young alone in the hallways. When asked during the interviews, the teachers all said they thought of Lexington Avenue School as a place where children would be fed, watched over, and kept safe. Mrs. Woods thought some of the children saw school as a refuge from problems at home. She told the story of Keith, a little boy who was very reluctant to leave at the end of the day. She pursued this with the school guidance counselor and eventually discovered that his mother often locked him out of the apartment for prostitution purposes. Keith's father was located, and he went to live with him in another school district, though he remained in Mrs. Woods's class until the end of the year. This pleased Mrs. Woods very much.

The teachers' maternal-like responses were not limited to keeping track of the children's physical and safety needs. They also instigated interactions that promoted interpersonal and whole group relationships. First, they often

employed inclusive, familial terms. At the end of a multiclass session in the library one day, for example, Mrs. Woods called to her students, "My kids, come here. My kids. MY class." Individual children were referred to warmly as "sweetie" and "baby." Mrs. Nelson had a naturally solicitous tone of voice that she used to her advantage in the one-on-one situation of Reading Recovery. In one of his first lessons with her, Jesse hesitated at the blackboard after he misspelled a word. "That's okay," she said forgivingly. "That's what we have erasers for." She believed all children deserved praise for work well done and modeled this in every visit. "You're a very good reader, and I love listening to you." "So nicely done!" She smiled often as Jesse or Jamar looked up from their reading and sometimes rubbed the boys' backs in a motherly way. Mrs. Parker also saw the need to praise children in school and was adept at acknowledging individual children's contributions to group discussions. "I do this whole thing about compliments, and just promoting each other."

At other times, the teachers' relationships with individual children were cemented in quite subtle ways. Tameika, for example, was a child who had entered Mrs. Parker's class late in the year. She was doing poorly in reading and was overly assertive with her classmates. She tried very hard, however, to please Mrs. Parker, whom she appeared to adore. During a group lesson in which Mrs. Parker stood at the board, Tameika was listening and watching her intently. She raised her hand excitedly to answer a question. Unfortunately, as she did so another child called out the correct answer. Mrs. Parker's eyes immediately met Tameika's as if to say, "I know you knew it, too." She then smiled at her and offered Tameika's still-outstretched hand a "high five." Tameika smiled back but also whispered, "I like that." She pointed to Mrs. Parker's silver necklace. Mrs. Parker looked down at her blouse, surprised at first, but acknowledged the compliment by giving Tameika a long, truly loving glance before going on with the lesson. Tameika beamed.

Mrs. Woods thought a lot about individual children in relation to the group. She never allowed a child to go without the school sup-

plies other children had even when this required her paying for them herself. She also did not allow the children to exclude one another at play, reminding them of this often. Neither did she tolerate any displays of unkindness, however slight. When a child was laughed at for giving a wrong answer, she informed the offender in icy tones, "So? At least he tried."

Finally, the teachers immediately rallied to the children's defense if one or more were threatened in any way, no matter what their status in the class. Stevie was another child in Mrs. Parker's class, who was often in trouble and had trouble learning to read. One day he and other boys had been sent to the bathroom. Not too much later, a few returned and rushed up to Mrs. Parker. Russell blurted out, "In the bathroom, there's some boys, and they said Stevie didn't know his time[s] table." He seemed to know this would be of interest to Mrs. Parker. She stopped what she was doing at the board. Angrily, she said, "And I hope Stevie told them, 'That's right. I'm only in first grade.'" When Stevie returned soon after looking unhappy, she said in a softer voice, "Stevie, you're not supposed to know your times tables. You're only in first grade."

Racial consciousness. The subtheme of racial consciousness involved specific articulation of race matters, including racism in the teacher's personal and professional lives. Each teacher spoke in interviews about her own discovery of racism toward Blacks and her empathy with the Black community at large as a result. Mrs. Nelson summed it up this way:

Well, let's put it this way. There is prejudice in this world whether we like it or not. I'm not in the business world, but if two people were applying for a job, same qualifications, the White person would get the job. . . . There is prejudice in this world. If there weren't, you wouldn't be doing your [study].

Furthermore, each teacher indicated her personal commitment to families at Lexington Avenue School and her investment in the children's educational triumph over the effects of societal racism. Class materials reflected many multicultural images that served to reinforce racial positives, from interracial harmony to the heroism of Martin Luther King.

Despite these overt signs of the teachers' racial consciousness, talk about race and racism in the children's own lives was not directly observed in the teachers' practice. The teachers offered two distinct justifications for not discussing race in the classroom, which at times contradicted each other as well as contradicted the teachers' own acknowledgement of race in the interviews. The first was the assertion by all of the teachers that the most equitable stance toward race was a color-blind one. Contradicting the focus on race as a nondistinction, the second justification the teachers offered during a group member check for not talking directly about racial issues in their classes was their unanimous agreement that they feared such discussion would be misunderstood by administrators, parents, and the community at large.

Comparison to the Literature

Significant similarities. Data analysis revealed that 24 out of the 25 subthemes in the data (see Tables 2 and 3) are found in the literature on effective Black teachers of Black children as well as that on the White Catholic school teachers. Basic skills, for example, were consistently described as essential to the early reading and writing program throughout the literature, regardless of the teachers' tendencies to individualize or personalize it as they saw fit. The authoritative approach to discipline found in the data also resonated with the literature on Black teachers, who consistently pointed out that Black children learned best when the teacher's style was not only firm but demanding and authority-based. Irvine and Fraser (1998) called these teachers "warm demanders." The teachers' view of themselves as second mothers was a theme also found throughout the literature on effective Black teachers. Foster's (1997) Ms. Forsythe reported that the first thing she did was "to become a mother to all of them," their "other mother" (p. 31).

Significant differences. Differences between Mrs. Parker's, Mrs. Nelson's, and Mrs. Woods's beliefs and practices and those of the teachers in the literature were also found. One difference was that commitment to the community for

some (but not all) Black teachers in the literature meant living in the community. For the teachers in the study, it meant a long-term commitment to working there.

A difference between the teachers in the study and the Black teachers described in the literature (as well as the independent White teachers, but not the Catholic school teachers) that appeared significant and warranted closer examination was related to the subtheme of racial consciousness in the larger theme of personal norms. Unlike the Black teachers described in the literature and some of the independent White teachers, the teachers in the study did not engage in classroom discussion with the children around issues related to their own experience with racism. By contrast, the Black teachers in the literature, and again some of the independent White teachers, uniformly promoted the need to openly discuss with their students what they perceived to be the unjust realities of growing up Black in a majority-White and often biased society. Both Irvine's (1990) theory of cultural synchronization and Ladson-Billings (1994a) linked such discussion to effective classrooms.

DISCUSSION

Culturally Relevant and Culturally Synchronistic Pedagogues

Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Nelson, and Mrs. Woods were nominated as effective teachers of Black children by their Black principal, Black assistant principal, and, indirectly, by the parent community. Their beliefs and practices were investigated in an attempt to understand what this particular community valued in its White teachers. Findings suggest that these beliefs and practices were complex, interwoven, and extended well beyond curricular issues. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Mrs. Parker's, Mrs. Nelson's, and Mrs. Woods's beliefs and practices resonated with the effective Black teachers of Black children described in the literature. This greatly furthers the value of what we can learn from them regarding the White teacher/Black child dyad. One example

is the teachers' embrace of content-based reading instruction, including a focus on skills in the early grades. As noted, this also receives much support in the literature on effective teachers of Black children. Yet it is an approach regularly disregarded by most teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2000), despite the fact that as a group, Black children continue to lag behind their White counterparts on most literacy measures. At the same time, the teachers' disinclination to initiate discussion with the children around race and racism contradicted a major finding in the literature on effective Black teachers of Black children, even in classrooms of young children. Moreover, it must be said that such failure to tackle racism openly with the children undermined the teachers' espoused beliefs and practices around respect for and empathy with the Black community at large, including a willingness to learn from it. The question arises, How serious a threat to the teachers' status as effective teachers of Black children is this limitation?

The answer is, Quite serious. It is imperative for teacher education programs to recognize the importance of assistance and training for White teachers in this area. This should include coursework on the history of Black education in America. Having said this, the nomination of Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Nelson, and Mrs. Woods as effective teachers of Black children forces us to see beyond their limitations for the simple reason that the community did. It also indicates that teacher educators must avoid codifying culturally relevant and synchronistic teaching. Grounded as they should be in the real lives of Black children, they must remain elastic enough processes to accommodate both the known and the unexpected. Irvine and Foster (1995) wrote that in the absence of the ideal, the best teachers of Black children share the community's belief in "the power of education over oppression and discrimination and values such as discipline, resilience, achievement, and hard work" (p. 92). It appears that racial socialization can be served, albeit imperfectly, when teachers' expectations are high enough and coupled with a commitment to community members and norms. Even as we acknowledge the need to

dramatically increase the number of Black and other teachers of color, teacher education programs must reimagine possibilities for the intersection of White teachers and the Black community in the “learning lives” of Black children (Brooks, 1987).

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